

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for a mailing machine to provide evidence of postage for mail pieces comprising:

setting a postage value;

generating ~~indiciu~~ indiciu data for a first indicium based on the postage value, the first ~~indiciu~~ indiciu data being generated without accounting for the first ~~indiciu~~ indiciu data in the mailing machine;

storing the first ~~indiciu~~ indiciu data in a buffer;

continuously generating ~~additional indicium data~~ for a plurality of subsequent indicia in immediate succession without accounting for the ~~indiciu data~~ for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine and storing the ~~indiciu data~~ for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the buffer until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set;

determining if a mail piece is present in the mailing machine;

if a mail piece is present, retrieving one of the ~~indiciu data~~ from the buffer;

accounting for the ~~indiciu data~~ retrieved from the buffer in at least one register in the mailing machine when the indicium is retrieved from the buffer; and

using the ~~indiciu data~~ to provide evidence of postage for the mail piece.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein each of the ~~indiciu data~~ includes a digital signature.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein each of the ~~indiciu data~~ includes a value from the at least one register.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein generating a plurality of subsequent indicia ~~additional indicium data~~ further comprises:

~~generating a plurality of subsequent indicia~~~~additional indicium data~~ based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be if previous ~~indicia~~~~indici~~~~um data~~ had been accounted for.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein if a new postage value is set, the method further comprises:

erasing all ~~indicia~~~~indici~~~~um data~~ stored in the buffer.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein setting a postage value further comprises:

receiving the postage value from an operator.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein setting a postage value further comprises:

setting the postage value based on a weight of the mail piece.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein each of the ~~indici~~~~um data~~ includes an image of an ~~indici~~~~um~~, and using the ~~indici~~~~um data~~ to evidence postage further comprises:

printing the image of the ~~indici~~~~um~~ on the mail piece.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein using the indicium data to provide evidence postage further comprises:

~~generating an image of an indicium based on the indicium data; and~~

~~printing the image of the indicium on the mail piece.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein generating an image of an ~~indicium~~ further comprises:

~~combining the indicium data with other information to generate the image of the indicium.~~

14. (Currently Amended) A method for a mailing machine to provide evidence of postage for mail pieces comprising:

generating indicium data including a partial computation of a digital signature required to create an indicium that provides evidence of postage, the indicium data being generated without accounting for the indicium data in the mailing machine;

storing the indicium data in a buffer;

generating additional indicium data including a partial computation of a digital signature required to create an indicium that provides evidence of postage for a plurality of subsequent indicia in immediate succession without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the buffer;

determining if a mail piece is present in the mailing machine;

if a mail piece is present, retrieving one of the indicium data from the buffer;

setting a postage value for the mail piece;

accounting for the postage value from at least one register in the mailing machine for the indicium data retrieved from the buffer when the indicium data is retrieved from the buffer;

computing the digital signature using the indicium data and the postage value;
and

providing the digital signature as part of an indicium that provides evidence of postage for the mail piece.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein generating an indicium data further comprises:

generating an indicium data before processing of the mail pieces begins.

16. (Currently Amended) A security device for providing ~~indicia~~indicium data for use in evidencing postage, the security device comprising:

at least one register;

a buffer; and

a processor to generate the indicia coupled to the buffer and the at least one register, the processor generating ~~indiciu~~m data for a first indicium based on a postage value, the first indicium data being generated without accounting for the first indicium data in the security device, and storing the first indicium data in the buffer, the processor continuously generating in immediate succession ~~additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set, the plurality of subsequent indicia being generated~~ without accounting for the ~~indiciu~~m data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the security device ~~until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set~~, the processor, upon request to provide one of the ~~indiciu~~m data, retrieving one of the ~~indiciu~~m data previously stored in the buffer for use in evidencing postage on a mail piece and accounting for the postage value from the at least one register for the ~~indiciu~~m data when the indicium is retrieved from the buffer.

17. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 16, wherein each of the indicium data includes a digital signature.

18. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 16, wherein each of the indicium data includes a value from the at least one register.

19. (Original) The security device of claim 18, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

20. (Original) The security device of claim 19, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

21. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 19, wherein the processor generates the plurality of subsequent indicia~~additional indicium~~ data based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be if a previous indicia~~indiciu~~m data had been accounted for.

22. (Currently Amended) The security device of claim 16, wherein if a new postage value is set, the processor erases all indicia~~indiciu~~m data stored in the buffer.

23. (Original) The security device of claim 16, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

24. (Currently Amended) A mailing machine comprising:

a printer for printing an indicium on a mail piece;

a controller coupled to the printer;

a buffer; and

a security device coupled to the controller, the security device including at least one register and a processor coupled to the at least one register, the processor generating ~~indiciu~~m data for a first indicium based on a postage value without accounting for the first ~~indiciu~~m data in the mailing machine and storing the first indicium

~~data in the buffer, the processor continuously generating in immediate succession additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set, the plurality of subsequent indicia being generated without accounting for the indicium data for the plurality of subsequent indicia in the mailing machine until the buffer is full or a new postage value is set, the processor, upon request to provide one of the indicium data, retrieving one of the indicium data previously stored in the buffer and accounting for the postage value from the at least one register for the indicium data~~ when the indicium is retrieved from the buffer,

wherein the indicium data is used to provide evidence of postage that is printed ~~from the indicium for printing on the mail piece by the printer.~~

25. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein each of the ~~indicium data~~ includes a digital signature.

26. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein each of the ~~indicium data~~ includes a value from the at least one register.

27. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 26, wherein the at least one register includes an ascending register and a descending register.

28. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 27, wherein the at least one register further includes a piece count register.

29. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 27, wherein the processor generates the plurality of subsequent indicia ~~additional indicium data~~ based on what values of the ascending and descending registers would be if previous indicia ~~indicium data~~ had been accounted for.

30. (Currently Amended) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein if a new postage value is set, the processor erases all indicia ~~indicium data~~ stored in the buffer.

31. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the buffer is a first-in, first-out buffer.

32. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 24, wherein the buffer is integral with the security device.

33. (Currently Amended) A mailing machine comprising:

a printer for printing an indicium on a mail piece;

a controller coupled to the printer;

a buffer; and

a security device coupled to the controller, the security device including a processor, the processor generating indicium data without accounting for the ~~indiciu~~indicium data in the mailing machine and storing the indicium data in the buffer, the indicium data including a partial computation of a digital signature required to create an indicium, the processor generating in immediate succession additional indicium data for a plurality of subsequent indicia and storing the additional indicium data in the buffer until the buffer is full, the additional indicium data being generated without accounting for the indicium data ~~for the plurality of subsequent indicia and storing the additional indicium data in the buffer until the buffer is full,~~ the processor, upon request to provide one of the indicium data, retrieving one of the indicium data previously stored in the buffer, accounting for the indicium data when the indicium data is retrieved from the buffer, and computing a full digital signature using the indicium data,

wherein the full digital signature is used as part of the indicium for printing on a mail piece by the printer.

34. (Original) The mailing machine of claim 33, wherein the processor generates indicium data before processing of the mail pieces begins.